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Umbwe Route Itinerary

6 days 5 nights

The Umbwe route is considered by many to be the most scenic route on Kilimanjaro. The first day through the rain forest is steep and because it has a fast ascent to higher altitude, Umbwe is also probably the most physically taxing.

However, for fit adventurers the rewards of choosing Umbwe are plentiful. There are fewer people, the route takes you through pristine rain forest with the silence often being broken only by the noises of forest wildlife.

6 DAYS/ 5 NIGHTS

DAY 1: Umbwe Gate (1800m) - Umbwe Cave (2940m)

Hiking time: 5 hours

Habitat: Montane forest

You will be driven from your hotel to Umbwe Gate at 1800m, passing through villages lined with coffee and banana plantations. On arrival at the Park Gate you will be required to sign the register before you start your trek and here you will have a little time to check that you have everything you need with you for your first day.

The start of your route is through rain forest and as the name suggests, there is a possibility that it may actually rain! Please make sure that along with sun screen and a hat you also have waterproofs in your day rucksack – just in case!

The path is a continuous ascent on a rough path through the rain forest, and walking Pole Pole (slowly slowly) will allow your body to acclimitise as you quickly gain altitude. Walking slowly also enables you to conserve much needed energy, and most importantly, enjoy the environment and the company.

You will arrive at Umbwe Cave camp in the late afternoon. Your porters (arriving at the camp site long before you) will have already erected your tent and prepared afternoon tea and snacks.

DAY 2: Umbwe Cave camp (2850m) - Barranco camp (3950m)

Hiking time: 6 hours

Habitat: Montane forest & Moorlands

Shortly after leaving the camp the forest starts thinning and is replaced by rockier terrain, sparser undergrowth and straggly, moss-covered trees. The path continues along a narrow, spectacular ridge. As you gain higher altitude, you will catch glimpses of Kilimanjaro rising majestically ahead of you - etched against the blue sky and enticing you onwards. After an atmospheric day of ascent, the path flattens on the approach Barranco Valley, then descends slightly to the Barranco camp. The camp is spectacularly situated in the valley below the Breach and the Barranco Wall, and your campsite provides wonderful views. It is very cold here in the evening and at night, so be prepared to change into extra warm layers before the sun sets. From Barranco Camp you can watch the glowing shades of the setting sun light up the environment, constantly changing it as though in a slide show.

DAY 3: Barranco camp (3950m) – Karanga Camp (4040m)

Time (average): 3-4 hours

Distance: 5 km

Habitat: Alpine desert

On day 3 you will awake early to ensure a good start as the sun starts shining on the steep ‘Breakfast Climb’; a 257 meter scramble up the Barranco Wall. Barranco Wall *looks* more intimidating than it is in practice. Although steep, there is a good path all the way up and you will be amazed at how quickly and lightly the porters skip past you carrying all your equipment. In places you will need to use your hands as well as your feet, and your guides remain with you at every point to help or support if required. As you slowly traverse the wall to the top of the Karanga Valley your hard work is rewarded by the views. You can see back down towards the Barranco Camp and across the valley, giving a different perspective than you had when in camp. Then as you top out above the clouds you can rest a while soaking in the stunning views all around you.

From here you follow a path that meanders through the Karanga Valley up and over intervening ridges and valleys and finally down to Karanga Camp (4040 meters).

DAY 4: Karanga Camp (4040m) - Barafu camp (4550m)

Time: approximately 4 hours

Habitat: Alpine desert

From Karanga Camp you follow a path that meanders through the Karanga Valley over intervening ridges and valleys to Barafu (4,680m) - your final ascent camp.

On arrival you can soak up the view across the valley below to the rugged Mwenzi then rest in the shade of your tent before dinner. This is a long day for trekkers on the Umbwe, Machame and Lemosho routes as the final ascent to the summit (Uhuru Peak 5895m) starts this night. Rest stay hydrated, eat and sleep as much as possible. You will be awoken around 11pm for a hot drink and light snack before beginning your summit ascent at midnight.

It is always a good plan to be organised with all your clothing to hand and your head-torch, camera and spare batteries kept somewhere warm to preserve the battery life.

Day 5 – Barafu Camp (4,680 meters) to Uhuru Peak (5,895 meters) and then Mweka Camp (3,100 meters)

Distance: 4.5km / 3 miles ascent and then 11km / 7 mile descent

Trekking time: 6-8 hours to the summit and then 5-8 hours to Mweka

Zone: Glacial zone and the all preceding zones

Day 5 starts at midnight with a long upwards zigzagging hike with the stars above you and the heavy scree of Kibo under your feet. The going now is very slow, rough and tough. You will need to dig deep into your physical and emotional reserves at this point to maintain a consistent pace as you push yourself up to the crater rim. Pole pole (slowly slowly) is the mantra!

After around 6 hours you will reach Stella Point (5,739m.) where you will rest, have some drinks and snacks as you watch the dawn light the sky and the sun rise in its flaming glory over this spectacular mountain landscape. We recommend you have your camera ready at this point to record the sun rising on your achievement so far.

From Stella Point it is another 1-2 hours of a steady climb onto the crater rim and along to Uhuru Peak (5,895m.).

NOTE: Around 60% of climbers stop at Stella Point but most can make it to the summit if they can find the strength to push through.

Your guides are looking after you every step of the way and want you to reach the summit as much as you do – however, if you are experiencing severe AMS symptoms you must descend immediately.

Due to the altitude your stay at Uhuru Peak will be just long enough for you to celebrate your achievement and record the moment. You will then start heading back via Stella Point to Barafu where you will rest for a short time before beginning the descent to Mweka Camp (3,100m.). In total you will be trekking between 12-16 hours on day 5.

Day 6 – Mweka Camp (3,100 meters) to Mweka Gate (1,640 meters)

Distance: 9km / 6 miles

Trekking time: 3-5 hours

Zone: Rainforest

The final day on the mountain is a short one, but nonetheless tiring as your body will be exhausted. You will walk slowly down through the wonderful rainforest scenery towards your finish point at Mweka Gate (1,640 meters).

At the gate you will need to sign-out with the authorities and here you will also receive your certificate of achievement, either for Stella Point or for Uhuru Peak.

NOTE: It is customary to pay your tips to the trekking team in the morning at either Mweka Camp or at Mweka Gate before you depart back to Moshi or Arusha.

Should you wish advice on the tipping system please ask us.